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ABSTRACT

The Chicago Board of Education has been attempting to formulate a school desegregation plan to satisfy the U.S. Department of Education (HEW) guidelines for a decade. Public hearings and community participation are to be an integral part of the planning process. To determine the community's attitudes toward school desegregation, over one thousand black, white, and Hispanic students and five hundred parents were surveyed. The results of the survey indicated that while the majority of students and parents favored integration, they rejected a mandated plan and busing. Only one third of the students and one fourth of the parents believed that school integration would enhance student achievement, but over half of each sample believed that integration would help students to understand other races. The study revealed no significant differences in responses between the three ethnic groups and little difference between student and parent responses regarding busing and school integration in general. (Author/APM)

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PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE CHICAGO DESEGREGATION
PLAN

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The Chicago Board of Education has been attempting to formulate a school desegregation plan to satisfy the U. S. Department of Education (HEW) guidelines for a decade. The Chicago Board produced a volunteer desegregation plan (Access to Excellence and open enrollment), including the busing of 30,000 children. The U. S. Department of Education rejected the plan and recommended clustering and pairing of schools and the mandated busing of 100,000 Chicago children. Noncompliance negotiations reached a stalemate and the case was turned over to the Justice Department for adjudication. With the selection of a new Chicago Board and the appointment of Shirley Hufstedler, U. S. Secretary of Education, a new preliminary desegregation plan was negotiated in the form of a consent decree. It gave the Board broad powers to use a variety of desegregation plans including voluntary and mandatory measures (zoning, pairing, grade structuring, clustering and busing). Since the school population is 60% black, 16% Latino and only 18 - 19% white students, racial integration is a moot issue. (Fifty-five percent of the parents in this study felt there were not enough white students to integrate the schools).

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Public hearings and community participation are to be an integral part of the planning process. To determine the communities attitudes toward school desegregation, 1,040 Chicago Public School students and 547 parents were surveyed. The sample included 42% black, 12% white and 46% Latino parents and 55% black, 12% white and 33% Latino students (grades 7 - 12). Thirty-four percent attended integrated schools and 66% segregated schools. Only 20 percent were in the Access to Excellence (Voluntary) Program.

Responses to the 32 - item questionnaire are in Table I. The findings showed that 55% and 56% of students (S) and parents (P) respectively, favored integration in general and the voluntary plan (58% - 60%). Both students (72%) and parents (68%) also favored the neighborhood school plan. Although the majority favored integration in general, they rejected a mandated plan (74% (S) - 76% (P)) and busing (62% (S) - 65% (P)). Both students ((57%) and parents (41%) agreed that busing would not make the schools better. Similarly, only 33% of students and 28% of parents believed school integration would enhance students achievement. On the other hand, both samples (64% (S) and 51% (P)) indicated integration would help student "to get along with people of different races."

Their overall rejection of busing was graphically reinforced by their response to the questions, "What is the longest time you would be

willing to be bused?" in which 60% (S) and 47% (P) , respectively stated they wanted no busing at all. When asked "At which grade level would they be willing to be bused?" 33% (S) and 23% (P) favored high school, but 46% (S) and 43% (P), "wanted no busing." The antibusing sentiment was expressed by students to: "Would you be willing to be bused if your sibling and friends were bused with you?" Although thirty percent would be willing to be bused with friends, 50% rejected busing. Further substantiation against busing was students' answers to: "Would you like to be bused to white, black, Latino, integrated schools, etc?" Twenty-eight percent selected an "all integrated school (in contrast to partially integrated), but 46% rejected busing. Also when parents were asked "how many students should be bused -- 30,000, 50,000, 100,000 students," 58% stated there should be no busing."

The majority opinion against busing^{but}for the voluntary, neighborhood school plan was reflected in the multiple choice question, "I would not like to be bused because" (sample could select more than one choice); 21% (S) and 35% (P) said it was "too inconvenient;" 52% (S) and 35% (P) "I like my present school," and 27% (S) and 28% (P) "I'm against busing." The open-ended question provided some insight into their responses: All students basically rejected busing because of fear for their safety, liked their present school, waste of money and time, and could not take part

in after school activities. On the other hand, they favored integration because they would meet students of different ethnic groups and races and learn how other groups live. They qualified their responses "if there were good teachers and students." However, black students felt integration would enhance their education, except if the schools were of higher quality. Latino students appeared to have the greatest objection toward busing. They didn't like mixed nor black schools. They feared racial conflicts in particular.

Parents' open-ended responses were similar to the students. Most parents felt it was too late to use forced desegregation and instead should improve the quality of the community schools. "Busing does not change attitudes." But it "will only make whites leave the city." As one parent stated, "I surely wouldn't want my children bused out of the neighborhood I worked so hard to be in. The neighborhood would lose its identity and closeness with the school environment."

Another parent summed up the responses of others: "Busing children to achieve integration only in the debt-ridden system would be intolerable if you don't have money to offer something 'special' at the end of the line, you cannot justify wasting millions on busing and gas."

Latino parents were adamantly against integration and especially busing. They felt it would destroy their bilingual education programs, and

the cultural climate of the schools and the community. The parents were particularly apprehensive about the safety of their children on the buses and in distant schools.

Parents consistently rejected busing, but students gave a 69% favorable (parent 77% rejection) response to: "Would you like to be bused to a good school in a good community?" But both groups gave a 68% (S) and 58% (P) ^{negative response} to: "Would you like to be bused into a racially different community?" When asked, "What racial percentages would you like in the schools?" ^{of parents} 31% of students and 40% chose fifty percent of each race, while 40% of students and 39% of parents stated "it would not matter."

However neither students nor parents objected to the race of the teacher. Seventy percent of students and 73% of parents rejected the notion that the teacher should be of the same race as the students.

Although they rejected busing, 64% (S) and 65% (P) stated they would not move out of the city if bused. Nor would 55% of students and 49% of parents transfer to private (parochial) schools to keep from being bused. These latter responses may seem contradictory on face value. Since 88% of the sample was black and Latino and mostly of lower socioeconomic backgrounds, they would not have the same residential and educational mobility as the white or the middle socioeconomic populations.

Also the issue of busing appeared to depend on whom was being bused. When asked, "Would you want students of other races bused to your school?" Forty-seven percent of students and forty-three percent of parents stated "yes." But when responding to: "Would you like to be bused into a racially different school?" 68% of students and 58% of parents stated "no."

An analysis of the findings showed there was no significant difference in responses between the three ethnic groups. Also, there was little difference in student and parent responses regarding busing and school integration in general. Integration is accepted on the basis of improving race relations, but not academic achievement. Only improving the quality of the neighborhood schools, which the majority favors, will enhance achievement. Black parents and students felt black schools were academically inferior to white schools, while Latinos believed their schools to be good. All racial groups preferred to remain in their neighborhood school; and only blacks favored other ethnic/racial groups being bused to their school. Students appeared more favorable toward being bused to a good school in a good community than parents. However, some parents suggested a pilot-study or trial desegregation of some of the Chicago schools.

These findings suggest that the courts will have less and less influence in ordering busing to desegregate schools. Since the consent decree for desegregation of Chicago schools includes community input and hearings, court-ordered busing does not appear to be a realistic option for Chicago either.

Chicago Students' and Parents' Attitudes Toward School Desegregation

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Students'</u> <u>Responses (%)</u> (N=1040)			<u>Parents'</u> <u>Responses (%)</u> (N=547)		
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
1. Do you favor school integration?	56	29	15	55	38	8
2. Do you favor a volunteer integration plan?	58	28	14	60	34	8
3. Do you favor mandated or forced integration?	10	74	15	14	76	10
4. Do you favor attending a neighborhood school?	72	20	8	68	17	15
5. Do you favor busing to integrate the schools?	26	62	12	26	65	9
6. Would school integration help students' achievement?	33	37	30	28	46	25
7. Would integration help students to get along with people of different races?	64	18	19	51	33	17
8. Would busing make the schools better?	29	41	30	18	57	25
9. Would you want students of other races bused to your school?	47	29	24	43	40	17
10. Do you think businesses would leave the city if there were busing?	15	54	31	18	45	37
11. Do you/your children have friends from lower social classes?	57	31	12	72	21	8
12. Would you/your children like to be bused into a racially different school?	18	68	15	30	58	12

Chicago Students' and Parents' Attitudes
Toward School Desegregation continued

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Students'</u> <u>Responses</u> (%) (N=1040)			<u>Parents'</u> <u>Responses</u> (%) (N=547)		
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know
13. Do you/your children have friends of other ethnics or races?	76	19	5	--	--	--
14. Do you/your children attend an Access to Excellence Program?	20	66	14	19	66	15
15. If so, do you like the program?	17	24	60	24	26	50
16. Would you like to be bused into a good school in a poor community?	24	55	22	38	53	9
17. Would you like to be bused into an average school in a good community?	42	41	18	30	57	14
18. Would you like to be bused into a good school in a good community?	69	20	11	14	77	9
19. Does the social class level of the school influence your opinion of integration?	24	43	33	23	53	23
20. Do you think you would move out of the city to keep from being bused?	17	64	19	18	65	17
21. Would students transfer to a private school to keep from being bused?	26	55	19	34	49	17
22. Should teachers be of the same race as the students?	16	70	14	15	73	12
23. Are there enough white students in Chicago Public Schools to really integrate the schools?	--	--	--	17	55	30

24.	Busing will cause the following people to leave the city:	<u>Students</u>	<u>Parents</u>
	a. Blacks	9%	11%
	b. Whites	40%	55%
	c. Latinos	7%	14%
	d. None will leave the city.	41%	30%
25.	Which racial percentage would you like in your school?		
	a. 50% of your race, 50% of another race	31%	40%
	b. 75% of your race/25% of another race	18%	10%
	c. 25% of your race/75% of another race	4%	3%
	d. It doesn't matter.	40%	39%
	e. Schools should be of one race.	7%	8%
26.	What is the longest time you would be willing (your children) to be bused?		
	a. 10 minutes	13%	17%
	b. 20 minutes	9%	10%
	c. 30 minutes	13%	10%
	d. 1 hour or more	1%	10%
	e. Not at all	60%	47%
27.	At which grade level would you be willing to be bused?		
	a. K-3 grades	5%	10%
	b. 4-6 grades	3%	10%
	c. 7-8 grades	10%	14%
	d. high school	33%	23%
	e. I want no busing.	46%	43%

(8)

28. I would not like to be bused because:
(Can circle more than one)

	<u>Students</u>	<u>Parents</u>
a. too inconvenient	21%	35%
b. get up too early	19%	29%
c. afraid for my safety	25%	5%
d. like my present school	52%	35%
e. I am against busing	27%	28%
f. too far to travel	19%	33%
g. will not increase achievement	23%	19%

29. Would you like to be bused to an:

a. all white school	3%	-
b. all black school	4%	-
c. all latino school	8%	-
d. all integrated school	28%	-
e. partially integrated school	11%	-
f. I want no busing.	46%	-

30. Would you be willing to be bused if:

a. your brothers or sisters were bused	12%	-
b. your friends were bused with you	30%	-
c. you were bused alone	5%	-
d. I want no busing.	50%	-

31. How many students should be bused to accomplish integration?

a. 30,000 students	-	20%
b. 50,000 students	-	8%
c. 100,000 students	-	14%
d. There should be no busing?	-	58%

(9)